

Dear Mr. Lippman:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Morgan City, Louisiana, on August 22, 2003.

The New Orleans District continues to search for means to improve channel operability. The Engineer Research and Development Center study investigated the process by which fluff occurs in the channel. The study did not identify a final solution to the fluff situation; however, it did provide other possible alternatives that were not considered previously. When funding becomes available, the New Orleans District will pursue investigation of these alternatives.

Structural alternatives may be of some value either by increasing the flow or by reducing transport of sediments into the channel via the Atchafalaya Bay. Possible structural alternatives include rebuilding Point au Fer Reef to reduce sediment input from the Bay or building jetties along the bar channel in an effort to increase velocity of flow and keep sediment from dropping out of suspension in the navigation channel.

As you are aware, during the period from November 17-21, 2003, the New Orleans District conducted a Value Engineering (VE) study to explore alternatives that might be promoted to improve the reliability of the navigation channel with respect to fluff. In addition to the Corps, participants included stakeholders such as the Port of Morgan City, Atchafalaya River Coalition, marine operators, and national experts from

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the academic community. The VE report is scheduled for submission to the Mississippi Valley Division this calendar year.

In May 2002, the New Orleans District signed a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement with the Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District for a 3-year feasibility study of the deepening of the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black navigation channels. Justification for a deeper channel is a major challenge, given the high cost of maintaining the currently authorized 20-foot Atchafalaya River bar channel. We are

hopeful that our ongoing efforts to reduce the maintenance requirements of the 20-foot channel will also help reduce the incremental maintenance requirements for a deeper channel. We will consider project depths up to 35 feet in the study of the feasibility of deepening the navigation channels. The study completion schedule has slipped from May 2005 to January 2006 due to a shortfall in Federal funding for Fiscal Year 2003; however, it appears that Fiscal Year 2004 funding will be adequate to continue the study without further delay. We will continue to investigate and evaluate means to improve the operability of the channel at Morgan City and the problem of fluff.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army  
President Designee, Mississippi  
River Commission